

Agencies awarded impact grants

Groups receive \$25,000 in funds

Thibune staff report

Making an impact in the community is the ultimate goal of the Miami County Community Foundation. Through funding of grants, this goal is achieved.

The foundation recently awarded \$25,000 in grants to two organizations in the community that make a positive impact in the lives of Miami County residents.

These grants — made possible through the Community Foundation's Unrestricted Funds — will be distributed over a five-year period.

Eighty percent of the funds — \$20,000 — have been awarded to Miami County Helping Hands Inc. A human service agency established to provide critical services to low income families in the community.

Miami County families whose income is less than 150 percent of the poverty level are eligible for assistance.

BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success) is a grassroots initiative begun in 2007 to support family literacy and inspire lifelong learning for Miami County residents.

One book is purchased for every Miami County kindergarten student each month school is in session — currently totaling 4,050 books in 450 homes per year. The BOOKS program will receive \$5,000.

The Community Foundation seeks opportunities to assist donors in supporting nonprofit organizations and projects that impact the

MCF honors 35 CLIFF graduates

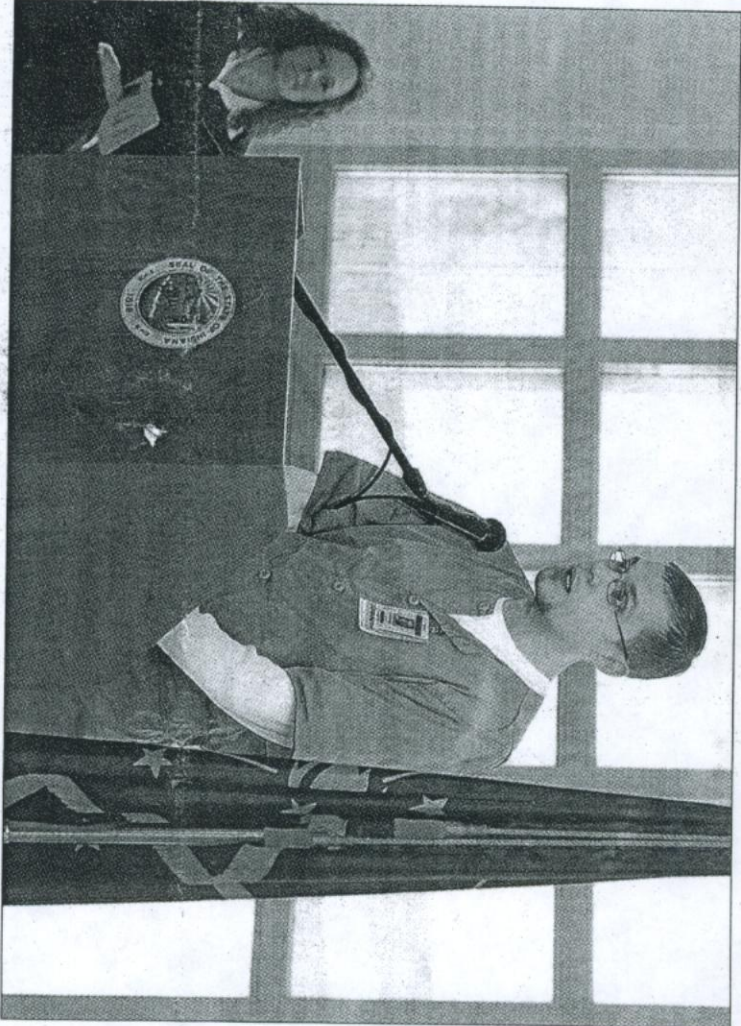
Offenders in program pledge to lead clean lifestyles

BY NANCY BENDER
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BUNKER HILL — Thirty-five Miami Correctional Facility offenders were recognized Wednesday morning during a ceremony celebrating their graduation from the CLIFF Therapeutic Community program.

CLIFF — an acronym for "Clean Lifestyle is Freedom Forever" — was established at the MCF in 2005. In the past six years, more than 900 offenders have completed the program. According to Tracey Jones, Correctional Medical Services (CMS) Addition Recovery Facility director, about 75 percent of the offenders who graduate from the program do not return to the Department of Correction.

"Your presence here today means that you've made that decision (to make a change in your lives)," said MCF Superintendent Mark Sevier to the graduating offenders. "The CLIFF staff has provided you with the tools to be successful after you've left here. How you use those tools is up to you. I'm very proud of you all for having come this far, but you have



GRADUATE SPEAKER — Graduate speaker Chad Jackson talks about the impact his incarceration has had on his son and his parents during the CLIFF program graduation ceremony Wednesday at the Miami Correctional Facility. Make this image yours. Go to www.peruthibune.com.

farther to go."

Sevier also acknowledged and thanked family members and friends who attended the ceremony.

"I'd really like to thank all the families coming out today," said Sevier. "I know it's freezing outside, so I greatly appreciate your mak-

ing the effort to be here. And I'm sure the guys sitting on the left appreciate your presence even more. Family is very important. Whether you're in (custody) for two days, two years or life, family is very important and I know your support means a lot to them."

As the event's guest speaker, CMS Additional Recovery Regional Director Mick Schoenrad expanded on the importance of family and the need for the graduating offenders to continue with their recoveries for themselves and their loved ones.

"You know, I always felt like I was Superman," said Schoenrad. "I felt like I could do anything athletically. Then two summers ago, I was playing basketball and (I) must have been wearing kryptonite shoes, because I fell and broke both of my

See GRADUATES / Page A6

Heart to Heart program to begin in Peru

Faith-based group similar to Big Brothers Big Sisters

BY SHERRY LOSHANSKY
Peru Tribune correspondent

Calline all Christians

Heart and it is a mentoring ministry of the Hub Youth Center. Heart to Heart is similar to Big Brothers Big Sisters, but it does have one difference — Carpenter



One doesn't have to look far to find hurting and needy children. Carpenter has been a mentor for six or seven years now and said he's seen firsthand the great need for mentoring in Miami County. Many local youth are from single-parent homes and they struggle at school and within

ences and go through an interview process and a background check, all of which are necessary as a safety precaution.

"Being a solid Christian makes a safer mentor because Christians have high values," he explained.

Mentoring, in a nutshell, is when a mature, caring adult spends time with

mentors

volunteer

at school and within

Graduates: Jackson speaks about his battle with addiction at the ceremony

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arms. It kind of feels like that (in custody), doesn't it? You feel like both your arms are broke; you're just plain stuck. I had a family all around me and I couldn't do anything, just sit in a chair feeling sorry for myself.

"One day, my daughter came up to me and asked when my arms were going to get better. When I asked her why, she broke down and cried, said she just wanted me to be able to hold her again. Right then, I learned I didn't have to be Superman and do everything. I want you (graduating offenders) to look over to your right at the people who are here for you. They're your superheroes.

"As long as you've been here, so have your families. Their hearts hurt, their wallets hurt and they worry about you and want to make sure you're safe. Since you started the program, have you raised the bar? Because if you don't make the effort (to reach for a goal of sobriety), all the superpowers in the world can't help."

One offender — Chad Jackson — spoke about his battle with addiction, supporting Schoenrad's comments.

"I am 30 years old and I am a grateful recovering drug addict," said Jackson. "It may seem strange to some of you to hear a man in prison use the word grateful to describe his demeanor. Hopefully by the end of my time at this podium those who do not understand my gratitude will come to understand and those who do understand will be encouraged to maintain the attitude of gratitude that they share with me.

"I was introduced to drugs at the age of 12 when I smoked my first joint. I started smoking marijuana regularly at the age of 14. Eventually, my experimentation led me to try LSD. Once I tried this drug, and it didn't kill me, all bets were off. By the age of 15, I was using any and every drug that I could get my hands on. I dropped out of high school to pursue the fast life of dealing, using and finding the ways and means to get

more. At the age of 17, I was introduced to the needle and the last 13 years of my life have been nothing but chaos, heartbreak and false hope with brief periods of sanity in between."

Jackson noted his addiction caused his son to be without a father for seven years, burdened his parents with financial responsibilities related to helping take care of his son and him.

"The emotional scars are extremely deep as well," said Jackson. "I have two brothers who have all but sworn off contact with me because of how deeply my self-destructive, inconsiderate actions have affected them. My son has to deal with the torment from other kids who tease him about his father being in prison. My parents have seen me rise from the ashes only to see my fall time and again to the point that they will probably always have a healthy fear that I won't make it. They will probably always be forced to live with the anxiety of wondering, 'When is he going to screw it all up.'"

"My treatment history includes a stint in a rehab

facility, three intense outpatient programs, a six-month stay at a halfway house and two incarceration periods in DOC totaling seven years. I am also a former graduate of the Wabash Valley CLIFF program."

The moment of clarity — said Jackson — was when he had to tell his son he had been arrested again.

"My wake-up call came when I was in the county jail and called my son's mom to talk with my son, who didn't know I had been incarcerated again," said Jackson after the ceremony, while visiting with his parents Joe Jackson and Anne Dine. "He said he hadn't seen me for a couple of weeks and wanted me to come get him and spend some time with him. I had to tell him I was arrested again and he handed the phone to his mom and I heard him screaming 'I lost my best friend again! I lost my best friend in the whole world!' That moment was a catalyst for my taking this seriously this time."

Jackson is scheduled to be released in April 2012.

"He's much more sincere this time," Joe Jackson said.

"When he was sentenced the first time, was the hardest moment for me. I've tried to fill in his place with his son — which I enjoy — but it's difficult."

"It's all been heartbreaking," added Dine. "Each time he's been sentenced, gone away, arrested, it's been excruciating. The worst part, I'd have to say, was not knowing where he was. I'd drive around in the worst neighborhoods, looking for him. We found out he was using drugs in his freshman year. He changed his circle of friends, the way he dressed, acted and especially the way he acted toward us.

If parents find out their children are using drugs, Dine said they need "get help now! Drag them kicking and screaming. There was no support for parents

when we were trying to help him. People would look at us and just say we didn't raise our kid right."

Chad Jackson noted he had a good upbringing, adding a person can't change their

habits until they are ready to.

"People do not change because they see the light, but because they feel the heat," he said. "I realized this is a cycle and that I can be better."

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